

WINCHESTER'S PAST AND ITS FUTURE PROSPECTS

An Interesting Tale of Early Struggles To Make a City Here, of the Building of the First Railroad, Establishment of Graded School and Kentucky Wesleyan.

(By W. M. Beekner.)

When I came here forty-nine years ago, on the 5th day of last January, Winchester, although called a town was really little more than a village. It had no railroad, and was without a school building, except the old Seminary which stood on the hill, facing East Hickman street, where the public school building is now located, and in which only boys were taught, when indeed a school was conducted there at all.

But Few Turnpikes.

The only turnpikes in the county then were those running from Winchester to Mt. Sterling, to Paris, to Lexington and to Boonesborough. The Lexington turnpike company macadamized Fairfax street (now Lexington Avenue) to a point in front of the Courthouse, where it was met by the Paris turnpike. Many of the pavements were made of flat stones, and a large part of the town was not paved at all. Waterworks had not then been thought of, and electric lighting had not been invented. If anyone had suggested the possibility of natural gas he would have been adjudged a lunatic at once.

Population Small.

The population was between seven and eight hundred, and the stores kept general merchandise for sale, with plenty of time for proprietors and clerks to sit upon goods boxes or stand at the door and gossip with passersby. The stage passed down from Mt. Sterling in the morning and came up from Lexington in the evening, and was rarely crowded. There was also a stage line running intermittently to Paris, going down in the morning, and coming back in the evening, so as to connect with the Kentucky Central trains to and from Cincinnati.

No Daily Newspapers.

There were few daily papers received in Winchester, and no paper of any kind was published here. There was plenty of grapevine news about the war, and very few of the reports in the papers were believed by the mass of the community, composed as it was in a large part, of sympathizers with the South.

Lawyers and Merchants.

Houston & Downey had just gone to Lexington, and Judge James Simpson, Major B. F. Buckner, Bush, T. S. Tucker, George Smith, Judge J. H. G. James Flanagan and W. D. Whitaker were the lawyers. John Taliferro, J. W. Harding, E. S. Jouett, J. W. Parrish, Parker Artis and others were the merchants. There was no mill in town. Dr. H. Taylor and Dr. H. M. Riffe were the leading physicians.

Many in Armies.

Many of the active, vigorous men of the county were off in the armies, either Federal or Confederate. I was an optimist, and not at all satisfied with conditions. The atmosphere was not favorable for progress and the people were indisposed to have improvements, particularly when they meant taxation. The county had had a bitter lesson in voting imprudently and recklessly, a subscription to the Lexington and Big Sandy railroads without guarantees for its completion.

A Student of History.

Before coming here, I had been an earnest and enthusiastic student of Kentucky history, and Kentucky resources, and had a high conception of the possibilities of the State. At the close of the Civil War, the county government and the controlling influences in Clark were in sympathy with the Union cause. Proslavery influences and the return of a large number of vigorous, active, bright young men who had been Confederate soldiers had turned the sympathy of the community the other way.

Whig Before War.

It had been a Whig county before the war, and the leading elements at the close were a little sensitive about lining up as Democrats. I issued a call on my own responsibility early in the spring of 1866 for a convention of the "donation" party in the county to meet at the Courthouse

on Courtday, and nominate a ticket of good men for the county offices. It was understood that this was to be an organization of Democrats, but it was not considered wise to say so. The conservative elements, however, so accepted it, and by a viva voce vote on the day named, a ticket was nominated by 467 of the voters of the county, with that lovable and admirable gentleman, Stephen French at its head, as County Judge. This ticket was elected in August 1866, and the county passed under Democratic control. I was elected Police Judge in March, 1865, sixty days after I came here, and found the place no sinecure. People had done as they pleased so long during the war, and so many wild, young fellows had come home from the army, that it was quite a task to restore law and order.

A School for Boys.

In the fall of 1865, I began a school for boys in the old Seminary, and taught it quite successfully, from a financial standpoint at least five months.

The first movement for improvement after the war was the building of the Red River turnpike road in which John Goff, William Franklin and others were leading spirits. Then came the Muddy Creek pike, which A. L. Haggard, Howard Hampton, Wilson Owens and others promoted, and a number of other turnpikes, which finally gridironed the county, and practically did away with mud roads.

The First Railroad.

In the spring of 1870, there was a movement to build the long neglected Big Sandy railroad by parties who as I became satisfied were without sufficient resources, and had in view a speculation on the subscription that they might get from the counties. I was vehemently opposed to it, but it was a popular project. As I feared it might carry without a counter movement for another railroad, I got up a charter, and had it passed by the Legislature, providing that on the petition of ten corporators, the County Judge should be required to submit a proposition.

There came a committee on a courtday morning from Lexington with a proposition all drawn up, and ready to be submitted to vote \$200,000.00 to build a railroad to the Big Sandy. It was being engineered by John B. Wilgus and others, and had as its attorney, John C. Breckinridge, whose great personality carried wonderful power in all this region. I had heard of their coming a few days before, and had the proposition of the cross-road from Paris to Knoxville drawn up and presented Monday morning to Judge French, with a motion to submit to the people.

A Great Fight.

There was a great fight between the Big Sandy proposition and the cross-road as it was called, which resulted in the former being beaten by a large majority, and by the latter being carried by equally as large a vote. The cross-road had much encouragement from the Kentucky Central, but was not built.

In 1872 the Elizabethtown, Lexington and Big Sandy railroad company was organized, and with C. P. Huntington at its back could give assurance that it would be built. It submitted a proposition to Clark for \$200,000.00 subscription. I was then County Judge and shaped the details so that the county could not be bound, except as the road was built.

Built to Mt. Sterling.

It was first built to Mt. Sterling, and afterwards continued to the intersection of the C. & O. at Ashland. A few years later the Kentucky Central made arrangements to extend its road, but first made a proposition to Lexington and Fayette county asking a donation of the right-of-way and the market house in Lexington for a depot. This was refused by our neighbor, and then Clark took the matter up through one of her active citizens and presented the advantages of running this way so strongly that finally it got the road without a subscription by an agreement only to exempt it from taxation

for a period of twenty years.

Triumph for Winchester.
This was a great triumph for Winchester and gave her an impetus such as no other circumstance has ever done. A few years later the Kentucky Union was built, giving us three independent lines of railroads, and making Winchester accessible from every point.

When I came here coal cost 45 cents per bushel, and wood sold at \$6.00 per cord. All other articles were correspondingly high.

The Graded School.

The graded school was established in 1878, after a hard struggle by the forces of popular education. Little more than ten years after we secured waterworks. About the time we got the public schools, I owned the corner opposite the hotel, which I sold to J. D. Simpson for the purpose of having erected on it an opera house.

With the coming of the railroads and the building of the turnpikes people began to flock to Winchester and business houses were improved or built to meet the conditions of the new era that had come to the town. In 1890, we had the so-called boom, which was of wonderful advantage to Winchester. It advertised the place afar, brought a great many people with money, and gave new life to the community. The street railway was built, and everybody got enthusiastic about the growth and possibilities of Winchester.

City of Fourth Class.

The city now belongs to the fourth class, but has a population which gives it a right to advance and to be a third class city, ranking with Paducah, Bowling Green and Newport. Situated as it is in a rich agricultural country, located so near to the wonderful wealth of Eastern Kentucky and blessed with such facilities, it has a great future before it. It has had no feuds, or lawlessness, is inhabited by a wide-awake, enthusiastic, homogeneous population and is up-to-date in every respect.

The location of Kentucky Wesleyan College was due to the determination of a few broad minded, resolute men. It is due to the truth of history to say it would never have been located here, but for the efforts of John E. Garner, Judge J. H. Evans and myself. Our Commercial Club has been a great influence for good in our community, and our old Building Association has been of incalculable service in enabling people to save their money and to invest in homes.

Have Had Strong Banks.

Since I have been here we have had strong banks, admirably conducted, and the people have always been able to get money with which to conduct the growing business of the place. I founded the Democrat in 1867, and for two years wrote every line in it, without compensation, using it as a force to build up the community, and to create a sentiment in favor of progress and development. Later the Sun was established, which finally became merged in the Sun-Sentinel.

The City's Future.

If the young men of Winchester will manifest the same public spirit and enterprise and self-sacrifice that animated the leading forces of a generation ago, there is no telling what the future of the place will be. With water, natural gas, railroads and proximity to the timber resources of Eastern Kentucky, the future ought to see Winchester a great manufacturing city; then our farmers will have a market at home for their surplus products and the young men who now sit on the streets, and complain that they have no opportunity, will find employment. Both city and community will grow wealthier, stronger, more intelligent, more liberal minded and better in every way. Let us all pray and work for this nobler, greater Winchester and richer, more powerful region around about.

Children Born in Workhouses.
A thousand children are born in London workhouses yearly.

WINCHESTER Opera House

October 12, 13 and 14

M'MAHAN & JACKSON'S

Advanced Vaudeville

6--Big Featured Acts--6

All Stars, Direct from the Keith & Proctor Circuit

Popular Prices

This attraction is strictly up-to-date with six of the most prominent features in Vaudeville. Something new and never before seen in this city.

TELEPHONE CO.'S NEW EXCHANGE

New Board is Now Installed and Will Be Open to Public on November 5.

The new exchange of the Old Kentucky Telephone and Telegraph Co., on Maple Street, will be ready for use about the middle of this month, but the officials of the Company wish to have set apart a day later on when the general public will be welcomed to make an inspection of all the new equipment.

It is thought best to wait till Thursday, Nov. 5th, giving sufficient time for the operators to become familiar with the operation of the new type of switchboard.

It is said that some machines can do everything else but talk. This new apparatus can do everything and talk—at least it assists talk, except occasionally, when out of order when it causes talk. It is thought this latter condition will be reduced to a minimum.

The switchboards are as finely constructed as a fine piano, quarter sawed oak being used. The boards are so arranged that one operator can answer and connect the subscriber on the system, without assistance from any other operator.

This will make the service much more rapid and certain than that of the old boards, where nearly every call required two operators to handle it.

It is popularly thought that a bell rings at central office whenever a subscriber calls for central; but such is not the case.

The officers of the Company are justly proud of their new equipment and with the roomy and convenient quarters. Remember the day, Thursday, Nov. 5, 1908. 10-12-11

FISCAL COURT.

The October term of the Clark county Fiscal court will begin tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock with County Judge J. H. Evans on the bench. So far there is nothing on the docket for this term but business of a routine nature.

ROYAL BABY PLATE



'THE RIM DOES IT' No tray No pusher
No using fingers
Will not upset
No spilling food

TEACHES THE BABY HOW TO EAT.

The Winn Furniture Co.

People's State Bank

CAPITAL, \$100,000

This bank began business less than three years ago, just in the beginning of the financial depression. Notwithstanding the hard times there has been a steady growth from the start, in the number of our depositors, and in the volume of our business. We enroll new names every week. We want yours. You are cordially invited to open an account with us. Personal attention to all business.

J. M. HODGKIN, Cashier.

J. L. BROWN, President.

L. B. COCKRELL, Vice President.

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Dan's Proverb.
Silks and satins put out the fire in the kitchen.

Sulphur Shower in French Town.
Charolles, a small town 30 miles from Macon, in France, has recently been visited by a shower of sulphur. The roofs, gardens, fields, vineyards, rivers and ponds were covered with a yellow dust, and for some time the peasants in the fields were troubled by a sulphurous biting odor which made breathing difficult.

London Fog Forty Years Ago.
The fog reigns in a world of its own—a world of illusions, of exaggerations, of phantasms. Forty years ago a London fog was described something like being embedded in a dilution of yellow pea soup, just thick enough to get through it without being wholly choked or completely suffocated.—London Strand Magazine.